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Acacia dealbata

[Synonyms : *Acacia decurrens* var. *dealbata*, *Acacia elataa*, *Acacia glaucescens*, *Racosperma dealbatum*]

MIMOSA (English, French, Italian, Portuguese) is an evergreen shrub or tree. Native to south-eastern Australia and Tasmania it has ball-like, deep yellow flowers.

It is also known as *Acacia* (French), *Acacia bernier* (English, French), *Acacia blanchâtre* (French), *Acácia Dealbata* (Portuguese), *Akácie* (Czech), *Akazie* (German), *Aroma*, *Australische Silber-Akazie* (German), *Blue wattle*, *Cedar wattle*, *Hopea-akasia* (Finnish), *Kapinicie* (Czech), *Mimosa argenté* (French), *Mimosa tree*, *Mimose der Gärtner* (German), *Silverakacia* (Swedish), *Silver wattle*, *Solly-Akacie* (Danish), *Sydney black wattle*, *Vaalwattel* (Afrikaans), and *Wattle cedar*; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of exquisiteness, fastidiousness, secret love and sensitivity.

The essence which is extracted from the small and fragrant flowers for the perfumery industry is known as *Cassie* or *Apopanax*. The gum which exudes naturally from the trunk is called *Wattle gum*.

Dealbata means ‘whitened’ with reference to the appearance of the young shoots and leaves. First identified in Australasia in the early 1800s mimosa has attracted its share of superstition.

At anyone’s approach it is said that this Australian plant droops its branches, and for some it is considered unlucky to bring the flower inside.

In 1982 a series of Australian postage stamps depicted Australian flora. The 35c. stamp bore the familiar yellow flowers of a wattle which is said to have been this species and which for Australians is a reminder of Christmas (the time when it is in flower there).

Today in India the leaves are an ingredient in commercially processed sugary and acid sauces for chutneys.

The deep yellow, ball-like flowers found in florists’ windows in Britain in the Winter are flown in from nurseries in the south of France, especially the hills to the west of Cannes where mimosa was introduced from Australia in 1839. This is only one of several of the *Acacia* species that provides the cut flowers familiar to European florists as ‘mimosa’.

Apart from the flower trade mimosa is cultivated in the south of France as an ornamental plant – one that in the right conditions can grow from anything between eighteen to a hundred feet, as well as being able to counter soil erosion. Its wood also provides local timber.

Mimosa can produce more than one dye. The flowers yield a yellow dye and the seed pods a green one.

The gum (which is sometimes viewed as a poor quality gum arabic, *Acacia senegal*) is an ingredient in chewing gum but is often supplemented by the warm and aromatic tasting balsam of Peru (*Myroxylon balsamum* var. *pereirae*).

Mimosa is believed to have been introduced to Britain in 1824.

It is the birthday flower for 5th November.